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LETTER DATED 29 DECEMBER 1995 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to refer to the statement by the President of the Security Council of 9 March 1995 (S/PRST/1995/10) requesting me to continue to keep the Security Council fully informed of developments in Burundi. In this connection, I should like to share with you my deep concern about the persistence of violence and the further escalation of human rights violations communicated to me in recent reports from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of my Special Representative in Bujumbura and other sources.

At the end of June 1995, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the human rights situation in Burundi, Mr. Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, undertook a visit to the country. According to his report, Burundi is the scene of a smouldering civil war. The situation has continued to deteriorate since May 1995 and is characterized by daily killings, massacres, torture and arbitrary detention. The human rights situation "reveals an increasingly marked genocidal trend of a socio-ethnic nature" and perpetrators are still enjoying impunity.

In the light of his findings, the Special Rapporteur puts forward a number of recommendations ranging from the consolidation of democratic institutions and the reform of the judicial system to the establishment of a national police force accepted by both communities and the deployment of human rights observers.

The deteriorating situation is underscored by recent decisions of international organizations including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the World Food Programme and most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to curtail or suspend their activities in Burundi following a spate of violent attacks against their personnel and assets. Furthermore, Burundi's borders with Zaire and the United Republic of Tanzania have remained closed for several days. There are also recent reports of a crowd numbering several thousand gathering in the vicinity of the Presidential Palace in the capital.

In the existing circumstances, I fear there is a real danger of the situation in Burundi degenerating to the point where it might explode into ethnic violence on a massive scale. In view of the extremely grave consequences of such an explosion, I should like to recall once more the proposals I made to

the Security Council on 19 August 1994 and repeated in my report of 11 October 1994 (S/1994/1152).

In particular, I suggested the maintenance in Zaire, subject to the agreement of the Zairian Government, of a military presence capable of intervening rapidly in the event of a sudden deterioration of the situation in Burundi, a preventive measure that could help to avoid a repetition of the tragic events in Rwanda. My proposals also included the deployment of a contingent of guards, similar to those sent to Iraq, to protect the humanitarian organization teams; and the deployment of human rights observers as recommended by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur and several other missions that visited Burundi.

In view of the worsening situation, the Security Council may now wish to give renewed consideration to my proposals for preventive deployment of military personnel and guards. As for the deployment of human rights observers, I regret to inform you that the High Commissioner for Human Rights has not yet been in a position to secure the necessary funds for this purpose despite numerous and repeated appeals to potential donor Governments.

In view of the seriousness of the situation, I have asked the High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Sadako Ogata, to travel immediately to Bujumbura as my personal envoy in order to discuss with the government authorities, at the highest level, steps that might be taken on an urgent basis to defuse the situation and enable international organizations to function effectively. I shall inform the Security Council about the outcome of Ms. Ogata's mission as soon as possible.

Finally, I should like to confirm that my new Special Representative for Burundi, Mr. Marc Faguy, left for Bujumbura on 28 December 1995 and will assume his functions there with immediate effect, upon his arrival on 30 December 1995.

(Signed) Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI